

Healthy Weight or Overweight?

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Up to 59% of dogs and cats are overweight, making this the most common nutritional problem for pets. Excess weight can reduce longevity and adversely affect quality of life. Overweight pets can suffer from a variety of issues, like skin problems, respiratory disorders, and renal dysfunction. They are at an increased risk for metabolic and endocrine disorders (e.g., diabetes), orthopedic disease, and some types of cancer.

Weight management, including obesity prevention and treatment, remains a challenge for veterinarians and pet owners alike. One study showed that among dogs identified as "overweight" by a veterinarian, thirty-nine percent of their owners thought that their dogs were at an acceptable weight. Many pet owners are truly unaware of the negative impact excess weight has on their pets' health.

Because this is such a common issue, it is important raise awareness about the negative health consequences of excess weight, promote the prevention of excess weight, and follow guidelines and tools for the management of weight loss and long-term maintenance of healthy weight. Remember that diet and lifestyle are important in ensuring that your pet is healthy and happy. If you are concerned about your pet's weight, consult your veterinarian to rule out any medical issues and recommend any lifestyle or diet changes.

How do I know whether my pet's overweight?

If you're unsure what your pet's optimum weight should be, perform this simple test: Place your hands on your pet's rib cage with your thumbs on the back.

- If you feel the ribs easily, your pet is considered to be normal weight.
- If you can feel fat between the skin and ribs or the ribs are difficult to feel, your pet is overweight.
- If you can't feel the ribs, your pet is definitely obese.

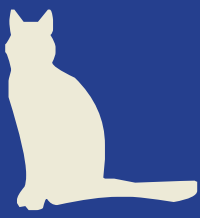
In some pets, particularly cats, a large abdomen that hangs down may indicate obesity. It's important to have this judgment confirmed by your veterinarian; he or she can rule out other diseases that look like obesity such as heart, kidney, or glandular disease.

Your pet is a healthy weight if ...

- You can easily feel its ribs.
- It has a tucked abdomen and no sagging stomach.
- You can see its waist from above.

Your pet is overweight if ...

- You have difficulty feeling its ribs.
- It has a sagging stomach, and you can grab a handful of fat.
- It has a broad, flat back and no visible waist.



Healthy Weight or Overweight...

If your animal is overweight, there are usually simple methods for losing those unhealthy pounds. With careful dietary management and oversight by your veterinarian, changes in diet and lifestyle can lead to a much happier and healthier life. There are prescription diet formulas available from veterinarians that can make finding and following a diet easy. Routine walks and playtime combined with a healthy diet can avert the need for medical intervention. As your pet ages, changing to a low-fat, high-fiber senior maintenance diet is typically recommended. Contact your veterinarian for professional and personalized recommendations.

